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C O N C E R N I N G T H E

D E A R N E S S O F P R O V I S I O N S,

A N D

E M I G R A T I O N ;

The Causes and evil Consequences thereof; and
some Proposals to remedy the same.

“ The King that faithfully judgeth the Poor, his
“ Throne shall be established for ever.”

P R O V . x x i x . 1 4 .

L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

IT is not improbable, but some may accuse the author of presumption, or impertinence, for addressing this performance to the First Personage in the nation.

If any apology be necessary on this account, he can sincerely aver, that he was not prompted to it, either by vanity, or want of respect to the Great Prince who now fills the throne of this kingdom. But can honestly declare, that as real sympathy for the distresses of his countrymen, and an hearty concern to see them under an absolute necessity of leaving their native soil, in order to maintain themselves with any tolerable ease, by which the kingdom (as he apprehends) must of course be greatly depopulated, induced him to undertake this work; so, he is so entirely persuaded of the goodness of his Sovereign, that if any new light is hereby thrown on the subject, or if from what is said, it may appear to be deserving of a more serious and national regard, that it would assuredly obtain His

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Majesty's countenance and assistance, as a matter which is conducive to the common good of his dominions.

And farther ; though the author does not flatter himself, that any thing which he can say, either merits, or will fall under the King's immediate perusal, yet he is not ashamed to acknowledge, that he has chosen this method on purpose to excite the public attention to matters so very important in themselves ; and if any, who have sufficient influence, should hereby be prevailed on to make a more effectual representation of them to the King singly, or to the whole legislature, so that redress might be set about in earnest, the end designed would be gained.

The grievances complained of are undoubtedly real and general, and they call for the deliberate consideration, and active zealous assistance of every man, who has either ability, patriotism, or humanity.

The childrens bread is indeed now given to the brutes, or it is consumed in making of liquors pernicious to the health of man, or wasted by the extravagant ; or it is withheld from them by the covetous, merciless, and oppressive, or offered to them upon such terms, as that they cannot purchase it, which is still more grievous and tantalising.

Even

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Even the proprietors of land, such especially as have but middling fortunes, are under a necessity to raise their rents, without which they cannot live; and though they are nominally, they are not in truth one farthing richer now, than they were before with half their present rent. The farmer and grazier avail themselves of this circumstance, as a plausible reason for advancing the price of their commodities, and no doubt it tends to their advantage.

Now, whether there be a scarcity of provisions, or there be no real scarcity, if there price is become exorbitant, and on that account the people are deserting their native country; as there can need no apology to lay these things before the public, so it is hoped, that the manner in which the author has executed it, will not be the subject of dispute; but that the measures intended to be pointed out may become the object of prime and serious consideration.

He is not so sanguine, or so attached to any schemes he may have suggested, as to expect that they should be adopted just as proposed; but only meant to shew, that probable methods are not wanting, and that proper measures should be taken to free the nation from the present excessive dearness of provisions, and to insure the continuance
of

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of plenty and cheapness as far as it can be done. However, he cannot but be of opinion, that it is necessary to increase their quantity, particularly that of grain, either by establishing magazines, or by a large and frequent importation.

For as the farmer and grazier are the persons from whom we are to expect provisions originally, and as the prices are now risen so high, and have been so long so; how can we ever hope to see them lower, if the public has no other means of supply than through their hands? Will they voluntarily lessen their price? To hope for it, is altogether chimerical. They know their commodities are necessary in the highest sense of necessity; they will be sold, because they cannot be wanted. Nor have we any sufficient reason to make us think, however of late we have had none from experience to conclude, that a year or two's internal plenty will occasion any material alteration in the price.

As far as such things can be reduced to a system, they crop and graze their grounds systematically. They well know what articles are in demand, and for so numerous a body are very dexterous in proportioning their labours to the public wants, and their own interest. If in particular hands there
should

should be an overstock of any article, it is well known that it is not a little hazard of losing by it, that will make them sell even at a small abatement. They hoard, and will not sell, unless compelled by necessity, that the price may be kept up, which is the grand object; and we see that their end is often answered. The truth is, that the farmers in general are become more opulent than in any former period, and therefore have too great an influence in directing the price of provisions.

If therefore we have no other source than the farmers, no magazines of corn established throughout the kingdom, neither grain nor other provisions imported as often as needed, to counteract the narrow selfish practices which have been unhappily adopted and pursued, it is impossible, or however highly improbable, that provisions should ever again be as cheap in this nation as they have been; nay rather it is presumed, that the price of them must continue high as it is, or even increase more and more to the accumulated distress of the inhabitants, if not to the utter ruin of this once happy and fruitful country.

I shall here beg leave to relate an anecdote, which was told me as a fact, viz. Somewhat less than two years ago, the price of wheat,
 &c.

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&c. in Newcastle upon Tyne, was either lower than in Norfolk, from whence very large quantities are commonly brought to supply that town and neighbourhood; or it was so low, that the dealers in corn and flour could not carry on their trade as usual. Upon this, some agents were employed to buy up the wheat at Newcastle at any price for a few market-days, and lay it up in houses hired for that purpose. Thus the prices were soon raised, the trade was revived, and the corn, which was laid up in granaries, sold in the same county at the advanced rate; and notwithstanding the late plentiful harvest, it still continues high. The farmer has found the sweet of it, and who can oblige him to lower it? This practice perhaps was not strictly illegal, and therefore had it been ever so notorious, it could not have been prevented; but it serves to enforce the strictures upon engrossers, &c. which are in the body of this work: it shews how much the public is at the mercy of mercenary designing dealers in the staff of life; and also how an artificial scarcity may be promoted, so as to produce the very effects of a real one,

Feb. 14,

1775.

A N

A N

HUMBLE ADDRESS, &c.

May it please Your MAJESTY,

AS it is the undoubted right of every subject of this kingdom to address the throne, it is hoped that it will not be deemed inconsistent with the respect due to royalty, to endeavor in this way to communicate to the King an account of some national grievances. The attempt flows not from a spirit of faction; it is not intended to reproach Your Majesty, nor to lessen that just authority, which by the laws you have over the people of this country; but is designed with the utmost humility, deference, and respect, by one who rejoices not more that he was born in this land of liberty, than that Providence has appointed him to live at a time, when the sceptre of these realms is held by a branch of the house of Brunswick. That he is a native of this kingdom, was not matter of his choice, but he values himself upon being willingly a subject thereof in preference to any other nation; and therefore, as a member of this community, is desirous also to be an useful member of it, and to testify his sincere concern to promote Your Majesty's honor, and the welfare of his country.

Induced by these motives, he ventures with submission to transmit the following to your royal notice; persuaded, that whatever there is in the manner, or however obscure the instrument may be; yet that the subject is neither unworthy your consideration, nor below your humanity, tenderness, nor affectionate love for your subjects.

At the beginning of the last session you were pleased to recommend two objects to the consideration of your parliament, viz. the East India company's affairs, and the dearness of provisions. The former is, I apprehend, a matter of comparatively little concern; and perhaps, if the property of those who have bought stock in it could be secured, the nation would not suffer by laying that trade open to all. The latter respects every individual, of whatever rank or condition, and particularly bears hard upon the poor: therefore every individual should contribute his utmost endeavors to remove the evil. And surely it was a proof of Your Majesty's philanthropy, sympathy, and compassion for the hardships and distresses of your subjects, and it must endear You to them, when they reflect, that their sufferings did excite such tender feelings in your royal breast, as to induce You to recommend relief to the great representative council of the land.

The parliament, however, to the equal amazement and disappointment of the people, did nothing, or next to nothing: whether they were unable or unwilling to remove the grievance must be left to themselves: it is certain they left the remedy to Providence. But your subjects still have

have confidence in Your Majesty; they look up to You as their common father; they hope, they trust You can and will do more than has been done; they expect that remedy from your goodness, which they vainly flattered themselves with from the wisdom of parliament; they persuade themselves, that your renewed recommendation of the hardships of millions will be more attended to than it was before, if not out of commiseration to the wretched, yet out of respect to Your Majesty's person. Therefore it is hoped that you will persevere to urge the case of your people, till such redress is obtained, as circumstances, and the nature of the calamity will admit of. Sorry, however, they are, that upon the meeting of the present session of parliament this was omitted in your gracious speech to it, as if the grievance no longer subsisted, or it was so diminished, as not to be worthy the consideration of a national council. It is true, Your Majesty may not be minutely informed of the hardships your people suffer from the continued dearness of provisions; your ministers themselves, on account of their elevated station, may not know the whole, or they may not chuse to trouble you with such things: but it is impossible that You, Sir, should be altogether unacquainted, that the price of the necessary articles of life is still exceedingly high. The demands of your own own household, it is not improbable, may at some time have been laid before You, tho' it be below your dignity to attend particularly thereto. And if the palace be affected hereby, what must be the case with every gradation down

to the lowest ranks of men? It is shocking to humanity, that in a country so fertile, and where plenty has usually abounded, the inhabitants in every part should be reduced to such great straits as they now are. For this does not only affect the larger cities and towns, or a few counties, but it is felt more or less through the whole kingdom. Nor is it only bread-corn, but every other article of provisions that is dear. This is a circumstance, which, together with the length of time that it has continued, can hardly be paralleled in this nation. At other times, if grain has been dear, animal food has been reasonable; and even that has continued comparatively but for a short space. An importation from abroad, or a plentiful year at home, has reduced things to their former state. But after several years experience, all sorts of butchers meat, as well as bread, are at an enormous price; nor is there any prospect of their speedily, if ever, growing much better, unless other and more prudent measures be adopted.

It is true, indeed, there has been a decrease in the price of grain since the last harvest, but not equal to what might have been hoped for, considering the goodness of the crop, and the favorable season for getting it. For tho' it must be allowed, that in some places the weather was wet and windy, yet this could have no great effect upon the whole nation. The seed-time for wheat in 1772 was generally very good; and the summer of 1773 was better than any we have had for several years, both for grass and corn. But what benefit has been derived from thence? Beef, mutton,

ton, &c. have continued nearly at the same prices; and there is but a trifling decrease in the price of corn. The latter will appear very plain, if we consider the average prices of grain in England, as published under the direction of parliament. Thus the average price of wheat upon the whole, in all the counties of this part of the kingdom, was in the month of September 1773 at or about seven shillings the bushel. But at that time little of the year's produce could be got to market. Besides, it is then often higher than at any other part of the year. Let us now see from the same average prices, what fall there has been in the value of wheat since.

From Nov. 29, to Dec. 4, 1773, wheat at highest 6s. 11d. ditto lowest 5s. 1d. From Dec. 27, 1773, to Jan. 1, 1774, highest 7s. lowest 4s. 11d. From Jan. 10, 1774, to ditto 15, highest 7s. lowest 5s. 1d. Jan. 17, to ditto 22, 1774, highest 7s. lowest 5s. 2d. Thus the mean prices of this grain, in all the counties of England, was at the above periods about six shillings the Winchester bushel. If at any time of the year it would be cheap, it must most likely be between Christmas and Candlemas; when the husbandman's labor being mostly confined within doors, he has more time to thresh his corn, and for other obvious reasons. Therefore I conclude we have no good grounds to expect, that it will be much, if any thing, cheaper, unless in case of importation, before a new crop is got off the ground. And even then, supposing it should prove a plentiful one, there is no great reason to hope that matters should be much altered for the better,

better, except by a continued importation, or there be a change in certain measures, which in the opinion of some, and indeed with great appearance of truth, seem to have no inconsiderable tendency to produce the evils complained of. For, however paradoxical it may be thought, there is a high probability, that whilst the present practices and manner of living, luxury and extravagances are continued, even plenty itself will not reduce the price of provisions to what it has been in our own times; nor so low, as that the common people, and, what is still more desirable, that the poor may be able to purchase them without distress to themselves. For, should the price of corn once fall below that, at which it is allowed by statute to be exported, the exportation will commence, and that alone will render it too dear for the generality of the inhabitants to purchase with ease; and when grain is dear, that will have a proportionable influence upon the other necessary articles of life. It is therefore obvious to see, that something must be miserably wrong within us; and it is to be feared, that the excessive dearness of provisions is the effect of some settled general evils not attended to; and consequently that the disease cannot be radically cured, till these causes are removed. This in sound policy, as well as in humanity, should be attempted; for all other measures are only so many palliatives, which, being ignorantly or designedly applied by the state-physician, will not fail to weaken his patient's strength, and in time to produce fatal consequences.

Several

Several attempts have been made to investigate the reasons of the present high prices of grain, and other provisions. The vast increase of horses, throwing of small farms into one, and single persons occupying two or more large farms; engrossing and forestalling of provisions, bad seasons, short crops, and even scarcity itself have been severally assigned as causes of the present dearth. And perhaps every one of these may have contributed something to produce this national calamity. It is certain that such things have been; and if several of them should concur at the same time, it is no wonder, even without an actual scarcity, if so great and general an evil as that, with which this kingdom has been afflicted, should be the effect. But whatever be the immediate and prevailing causes, or whatever be the remote and secondary causes, they all claim the attention of the legislature; for till they are removed either wholly or in part, we cannot hope for plenty and cheapness.

Some indeed have thought, that we have no real, but an artificial scarcity; and I cannot but think, that there is more truth in this opinion than is commonly imagined. For certain it is, that very large tracts of moor-grounds have been inclosed and improved of late years; so that that, which before was comparatively barren, now produces great quantities of corn, or grass, or both. The division and inclosure of common fields, a measure which of late has been very prudently adopted, is also exceedingly advantageous; for the possessor has thereby increased the worth of his property

property at least one fourth, and this of course must enlarge the produce for the benefit of the public in the same proportion, or, however, the produce will be allowed on all hands to be considerably increased. Besides, agriculture, as an art, is now so much improved, that the same quantity of ground affords a greater produce than formerly. Thus from these causes a larger quantity of provision of one sort or other undoubtedly is raised.

But what has been the effect? Would not one naturally expect that cheapness should flow from plenty? or at least, that things should be as cheap as they were before this accession of arable land, and this improved state of husbandry? Nothing like this is the fact. Every kind of grain, and other necessary articles of life, have advanced in price for several years past. What reason can be assigned for this? The farmer roundly answers, defective crops; because that answer is readiest, or most plausible: but is there any real ground for saying so? or must we believe it, because he who advances it may be supposed most likely to know the truth? However this be, it is worth examining into; for if there be a real scarcity, then prudence, good government, and even necessity require, that a supply should be procured, if it can be got. But if there be a scarcity, it is probable, that it is in a great measure a pretended or artificial one; for, besides that an interested person should not be implicitly trusted in his own case, the above reasoning will shew, that as we have more land from the taking in of commons, and that the same quantity of ground is made to yield more, owing
to

to our improved skill in husbandry; so there must be a larger produce. What then becomes of it? and how is it consumed? It will not be said that the inhabitants are increased; for if the ingenious Dr. Price's calculations be just, then it is certain, that the number of inhabitants in the nation at large is greatly diminished within a century past. The well-known depopulation of country villages in almost every county in England is a confirmation of this melancholy truth. The above gentleman says, that the number of inhabitants in England and Wales is reduced near a quarter in eighty years, or from about six millions to four millions and a half. But supposing we are reduced only one million, less would be required to support the whole; and yet still as much, or rather more, is brought to market than was forty years ago, when things were cheaper; as appears from Mr. Francis Moore's table of sheep and black cattle exposed to sale in Smithfield market for forty years past, from 1731 to 1770 inclusive*. Nor have we any good reason to believe that the inhabitants of London are increased in number, nay, the contrary seems to be more probable, notwithstanding the apparent greater magnitude of the city, owing chiefly to the widening of the streets, making new passages, and the buildings now occupying more ground than formerly. From all which, as it is plain, that the consumption is as great now, when there are fewer to occasion it; so there is as great a quantity of provision raised in

* Considerations on the exorbitant Price of Provisions, p. 12.

the country, as when it was cheaper. And from this, the inference seems to be very plain, that the dearness of provisions is not owing to their real scarcity; but is occasioned, either by a greater consumption, tho' the people are fewer; or by some unusual and extraordinary misapplication of grass and corn, &c.; or by the artifices of the farmers, who have it too much in their power to withhold the necessary supplies; or by those mediatory persons through whose hands the several articles of provision come to market, each of whom endeavours to get a profit, and so enhances the price.

But lastly, That the dearness of provisions is not owing to a real scarcity, or the want of a sufficiency for the inhabitants of this kingdom only, is presumable from this, viz. Among the various causes assigned for it, I do not remember to have observed, that any one has ever dared to advance, that when exportation was prohibited, the annual produce, during those dear times, has not been equal to the annual home-consumption of grain in particular, and especially that kind of it which is made use of for food for the human species. That there has been enough for such purposes, during this period, appears to be a fact, from the very trifling quantity hitherto imported from abroad, and from our being supplied from our internal resources; there being still enough for the support of the inhabitants, tho' many could not procure a due quantity, not owing to the want of it, but the excessive high price, and their disability to purchase at such rate. Under the circumstance of a prohibited exportation, it must be consumed at home

home (unless by illegal practices it be carried abroad); and yet, if there has not been enough for the support of man at moderate prices, it must either have been carried out of the nation, or been kept up or consumed by such methods as have enhanced the price, but which have not been sufficiently attended to.

Now, if there be any truth in the above reasoning, then the present dearness of provisions must be ascribed to some other cause than an absolute scarcity. And accordingly it has been thought by some to be mainly occasioned by the vast increase of horses, for the saddle, for the turf, or for carriages. And there is no doubt, that as they have been multiplied on these accounts of late years beyond any thing that has been known in this kingdom; so they cannot but have a considerable influence to raise the price of provisions; for more land is necessarily required to be laid out in grass, hay, and oats, for their support, notwithstanding which, considering the very many thousand of acres that have been acquired, and rendered more useful by the improvement of commons, there may still be enough for the use of man. And thus, tho' in fact we now have more improved ground than in any former period, yet it must be owned, far too large a portion of it is applied for the use of horses; and hence the oats, which not long since were the principal bread of several counties, are now devoured by these animals. Thus, as horses must be had, ground will be cultivated for them, which will diminish the quantity of that which should be set aside for other purposes; and as oats

are in a great measure their food, and the price of that grain is become too high to be continued as food for those people among us, who used to eat it chiefly ; so they are obliged to have recourse to wheat (for as to barley, as an article of bread, they are also deprived of that by another cause) and consequently, when there is a great demand for it, the price must likewise advance. This therefore, viz. confining the people, by a kind of necessity, to live upon one sort of grain, for which, as the farmer well knows there must be a demand, he is skilful enough to turn such circumstance to his advantage, and if he cannot sell for the present upon his own terms, he keeps it up till he can have his price, either by home-consumption, or exportation ; I say this must be considered as one pregnant source of the evil so severely felt.

To this also must be added the brewery and distillery, which, by consuming a large quantity of grain to corrupt the morals, and nourish the vices of mankind, have rendered barley too dear to be used as bread-corn in several parts of England, where it was chiefly eat ; so that now the people find it as cheap to live upon wheat, which of course must increase both the demand for, and price of it ; notwithstanding which, we have within ourselves a supply sufficient for home-consumption ; and therefore the high rate at which this grain is held, cannot be so much owing to the scarcity of it, as the certainty there is of selling it. For which cause, the farmers run no great risque in keeping it up, till they think fit to dispose of it ; and having once got the price of it raised, they will

will not only be unwilling to lower it, but will use every art in their power to prevent its falling again. Consequently, the most probable and effectual way of defeating the greedy, rapacious, and oppressive views of the farmer, would be to set up an opposite interest, by such persons increasing the quantity of grain among us, as are not themselves growers of it. Without some such method, we have hardly a rational prospect of restoring cheapness.

Ingrossing of farms may also be considered as contributing in part to produce this evil; for certainly the more land is got into fewer hands, the more it will be in their power to fix the price of the produce of it, and to withhold it from market under the hope of selling it upon their own terms. This becomes still more probable, when disproportioned quantities of ground, such as 1000, or 1500 acres or more are occupied by single persons. Such farmers become too powerful for the good of the community, and being able to keep up what is not perishable, or will not soon spoil, or even not scrupling to lose a little, that they may keep up the prices, and not being under the necessity of selling the year's produce to make up their rents, therefore they speculate in hope of an advanced price for their commodities. Thus the markets are kept thinly supplied; what is brought, being scanty in quantity, fetches an higher price, since the wants of the people must be supplied; and this breeds a general, tho' ill-grounded opinion of a scarcity: hence those who buy corn, &c. with a view to trade therewith, apply to the great farmers,

farmers, who sell what they chuse to dispose of at their own homes, and often upon their own terms. That this is too much the practice with regard to corn, cattle, butter, cheese, &c. will hardly be denied; and being productive of, or even having a tendency to produce such consequences, a speedy remedy should be applied, if there is a possibility of it. But there is an absolute certainty, that ingrossing of farms is the cause of depopulating the country, and of driving from thence vast numbers of those useful members of society, the labouring husbandmen, with their families, into towns, where, either through want, or a different manner of living, many of them soon die; or they go abroad, whence they do not return, and so are totally lost to their native country. This consequently is an evil which calls loudly for redress.

I know it will be said, that the farmer cannot afford the several articles he deals in at a cheaper rate, considering the rent he gives for his lands; and that while they continue so high, provisions must necessarily be dear, otherwise he cannot live. But this reasoning is as delusive, as it is artful and specious. For tho' I grant that the rent of land is considerably advanced, and with very good reason (for surely farmers cannot be so immodest, as to think that they should have all the benefit, and their landlords none) yet the improved method of husbandry, the grounds yielding a larger increase than it did before it was so well tilled, the farmer's carrying on his business with fewer hands, and with less expence than formerly, (as instead of
four

four horses, or two horses and four oxen to one plough, with one man to hold the plough, and a man or boy to drive the yoke, as was the case not many years since; now the general custom is to have only two horses to one plough, and one man both to hold and drive it) are considerations which may be supposed to be a pretty near balance to the advanced rent, or however, are so many arguments to convince us, that in reason provisions ought not on this account to be so dear as now they are.

Farther; agents for buying provisions in the country, together with ingrossers and forestallers of them, help not a little every where to make them dearer; for the former, to shew their diligence in executing, as well as to reap the benefit of their commission; and the latter, through an eager prospect of gain, prevent the respective commodities, which they are in pursuit of, from coming to open market. Of course there will be a greater demand for the little that is brought. Those who have illegally got any article of provision into their hands, will be sure not to sell it again without a profit, if they can keep it. The farmer, who first raises such commodities, likes better to sell them at home, because that is attended both with less trouble and expence. And thus a tax is levied upon the public against common justice, and the end of markets and fairs is in some measure defeated. Whereas, if the produce of every county was honestly and openly exposed to sale at the accustomed and proper places, the price would always be regulated by the quantity and demand.

But

But there is another cause of the dearness of all sorts of provisions, which has been very little, or not so much attended to as it ought, viz. the luxury and extravagance of living, which now prevail every where in the kingdom. That it is to be accounted for in a great measure upon this principle, is evident from what has been said before, p. 9, and 10. For if it be true, as there asserted, that the number of inhabitants is greatly decreased, both in the nation at large, and in the capital; and if, notwithstanding this, as great a quantity of provisions of all sorts is now raised, as is highly probable, from our increased quantity of arable and grass ground, and from the improved method of husbandry; and yet, if now there is as great or greater consumption of beef, mutton, &c. in London particularly, and in general throughout the nation; whence does it arise, that more should be required at this time for a less number of people? Exportation is prohibited, and the importation of Irish beef, &c. is allowed. Will it be said that we are stronger, and have keener appetites than our predecessors? This will scarce be granted. And yet the fact is, that with fewer numbers the consumption is at least equal. The truth is, that we have departed from that frugality and simplicity of diet, which was usual both in the metropolis, and in the country among the bulk of the people, and have degenerated into such a vitiated taste and manner of living, that tho' we cannot eat more than our forefathers, yet a greater variety, and the aids of cookery, are more requisite to please the palate. A single dish and a pudding

in the city were common to a proverb. In the country formerly there was still greater frugality and plainness, but not less-wholesome food. But are their tables now so covered? Luxury has found it's way to both, being no longer confined to the great.

By luxury, I mean all that excess of expence, which a man in a middling or low station runs into, in the appearance he makes either in apparel, or at his table, that is above his rank and circumstances, as well as all that shew and pomp, that extravagance and ostentatious way of living, together with the vices incident to men of fortune, such as grand equipages, profusion at their tables, gaming and horse-racing. These are notorious; and as there is so much luxury among men of birth and fortune, so it infects others below them. The national luxury also is not a little increased by those who have suddenly raised great, and some of them over-grown fortunes in the East-Indies. With their riches they import the luxury of the country, and are emulous of their superiors in rank, both in figure and expence, that is in the faulty more than in the better part of their character. They fall into the fashionable vices; they are ambitious of seats in parliament, and spend largely to procure them; they purchase estates in the country, where indeed they might be a benefit; but being corrupt themselves, they corrupt others by their examples, and occasion a needless consumption. Luxury is indeed the vice of the age, and ought to be considered as an auxiliary cause of the excessive dearness of provisions. How

much is profusely lavished away in a luxurious man's family, which might be abated without any prejudice to his splendor or dignity, and which would afford a comfortable subsistence to many? How much is expended only for soups, strong gravies, and sauces? Even the coarser pieces of beef, which were within the purchase of the poor, and were their weekly supply of animal provision, are bought up, and boiled down for the sake of a small quantity of their juices, and the rest is thrown away as utterly useless, except to feed their dogs. Thus the rich have robbed the poor of that, which in a manner was their appropriated food.

Nor is this confined to men of birth and fortune. Those in lower stations imitate the example of their superiors. Tradesmen vie with the gentleman, and the farmer with them. To support such extravagance and luxury, they prey upon, they oppress each other, by exacting exorbitant profits for what they respectively deal in; but the poor suffer severely by their folly. Thus the public with abundance, or however with a sufficiency, acts like extravagant spendthrifts, or bad oeconomists, who are always in want or difficulties. But whatever be the cause, the excessive dearth of provisions is undeniable; and from hence result various evil consequences.

First, Whenever the price of the necessary articles of life rises so high, as to be disproportioned to the circumstances of the people, and cannot be procured with ease, this will surely produce general distress, and falls hardest upon those who are least
able

able to bear it. Not only the lowest order of people among us, but even all who have stated incomes (which in cheaper times would afford them a decent subsistence) such as clergymen with small benefices, curates, annuitants, and all that live upon the interest of their money, are affected by it. They are confined to a certain sum, and not having an opportunity of increasing the means of their support in proportion to the unavoidable expence of it, they are necessarily brought into difficulties. The labouring and poorer members of society always form the greatest part of it; and they are far from being the most useless. But as they depend upon their labour for their support, and very seldom have any other resources, and as their wages are commonly fixed, so that they can earn so much and no more, which often is not more than a maintenance for themselves and their families, therefore, when the price of provisions advances, they must be content either with less than is necessary, or live upon a meaner and less nutritious diet, to say nothing of clothing, which must increase their distress. But in such times as the present, many will be incapable of maintaining their families; and hence they become burthensome to the public. The provision for the parochial poor in this country is at all times amazingly great; and perhaps not only larger than in any one nation, but than in all other nations of the world, considered with regard to its regularity and certainty. It is indeed a burthen which has been complained of, and needs no increase, if it could be avoided. But how is that to

be prevented in such circumstances as the present? Must the labourer's wages be raised? This would have an ill effect both upon our internal and foreign trade, which is another bad consequence; for our commerce abroad cannot be long supported by means of our own manufactures, unless we have the materials, and can work them up, and carry them to market as cheap or cheaper than others. But if the labouring poor cannot otherwise obtain redress, they will seek it for themselves, by forcibly taking from others, what they have it not in their power to obtain by better means. This has often been experienced; and tho' it be done only in cases of necessity, yet it is always to be dreaded, not only because of the immediate mischiefs occasioned thereby, but because it tends to weaken the foundations of good government.

But lastly, Whenever provisions become exorbitantly dear, and continue so for some time, it will put people upon enquiry, where they can be got at an easier rate; and hence emigration. That scarcity, or difficulty of procuring the necessary articles of life, will produce this effect, as well as tyranny, is certain; for however agreeable a country may be, however favourable to civil liberty the form of it's government is, such considerations must give way to the supreme law of nature, the preservation of life. Consequently, tho' it is not without difficulty that men get the better of their natural attachments to the place of their nativity, yet if their labour is not sufficient for their support at home, and if there is a country, where by the same means they can procure to themselves abundance,

dance, and where the increase of their families will be the increase of their plenty, and they can enjoy it with the same freedom and security, *there* they will be induced to go and settle, especially if encouraged by the successful experience of former adventurers, their friends and acquaintance. Many have found the benefit of it, and that has been a temptation to others to follow their example, by which great numbers are lost to the mother-country.

Emigration to our colonies has long been practised, nor perhaps was it formerly considered as a disadvantage to the seat of British empire; but now it is become alarming. The numbers of settlers that have gone of late years from Ireland to America are almost incredible, so that that kingdom must be greatly drained. By the testimony of Messrs. Anderson and Goldy, upon their examination before the House of Commons the first of last March, it appears that 600 out of 1800 spinners had emigrated from a certain district in the county of Sutherland, and so in proportion from several other places in that part of the kingdom. Nor is the desire of emigrating confined to the above-mentioned countries: But as the dearth of provisions is general among us, so is the inclination to go abroad in quest of a cheaper country. Nothing is more common now, than for ships, going to America, to advertise for passengers and indented servants. Nor is that done without more success than perhaps is consistent with the national good. The north of England has sent many of late; and the inclination to emigrate

grate seems to prevail more and more. In the winter and spring of the year three ships have sailed with emigrants from Shields only, and the greatest number went with the last ship. Others have gone from Sunderland, Scarborough, and Hull. Now, whatever their numbers be, there is a proportionable depopulation of the country. Is this then to be accounted a national prejudice or not? Consider, those who emigrate in general are such as are forced to it by the difficulty of living, or who are desirous of living better than they do at home; they are such as subsist by their labour, and are willing to be industrious. The loss of such is consequently the loss of so many useful members of society; for with themselves they carry their husbandry and mechanical arts. Besides, we not only lose so many individuals for the present, but also their posterity.

Can we spare them? or will their emigration render provisions more plentiful and cheaper at home? I suspect neither of these will be found to be true. The vast numbers that perished in the late war will overturn the former supposition; and the observation which Bishop Burnet*, in his letter from Zurich, makes concerning the ill influence of an oppressive government to depopulate and impoverish the most fruitful countries, whilst under a mild constitution, population is promoted with the enjoyment of ease and plenty, may be applicable to and overturn the latter. For, as he very sensibly remarked, upon a view

* Burnet's Travels.

and comparison of the best parts of France and Italy, with the barren rocks of Switzerland; that the people in the latter lived easy and happy, whilst other rich and plentiful countries were reduced to such misery, that as many of the inhabitants were forced to change their seats, so those who staid behind could scarce live; in like manner, either scarcity, or excessive dearness of provisions, will put people upon going into those countries, where they may be procured with greater ease; nor will it be certain, that they which remain will have them either in greater plenty or cheaper. For as there will be less consumption, and consequently less encouragement to industry, they whose business and interest it is to rear provisions, will only be concerned for such supplies as are answerable to the demand, and may serve their own purposes of keeping up the prices, and securing a profit to themselves.

Every state is happy and powerful in proportion both to the number of its inhabitants, and the plenty and ease of obtaining subsistence. These two considerations enter into the idea of a great and well-regulated kingdom, and have a very near connexion with and influence upon each other. Where the inhabitants are few, but live at ease, and in plenty, they are apt to be envied, and disturbed by more powerful neighbours, against whom they are not able to make resistance. If they are so numerous, that they cannot get subsistence in their own country, nor have the means of procuring it elsewhere upon such conditions as are within the reach of the generality, they

they will seek for it by their own removal. If it be a trading country, and has foreign commerce, then the inhabitants must be able to procure provisions at easy, or however at such easy rates, as to trade with other countries to advantage, otherwise their manufactures must lay upon their hands. Hence will ensue decay of foreign commerce; the manufacturers of that country will not be able to support themselves at home by their arts and labour; and as these are their dependence, they will consider where, by such means, they can procure subsistence; and thus also emigration will be the consequence. Hence the internal strength of a nation must be greatly weakened. Other disagreeable effects will likewise flow from this cause, viz. the source of riches will be cut off, a capacity of self-defence, and, much more, superiority over other nations will be taken away, and in the instance of our own nation, I will add, that the spring of our beloved luxuries will be drained up. Human affairs have an intimate connexion one with another, and great revolutions have proceeded from seemingly trifling and inadequate causes at first. A prudent and wise administration will attend to these, as well as to what for the present is visibly threatening and dangerous, and will endeavour to provide against those practices, which imperceptibly to the vulgar eye undermine the public welfare.

Having thus attempted to unfold the causes of the present dearth of provisions, I do not pretend to say that any one of them singly produces this effect, but that all contribute to it, some more,
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some less; nor would I be understood to mean, that we have had no bad seasons, nor defective crops of late, tho' I am of opinion, that there neither has been for a few years past, nor now is, such a real scarcity among us, as to occasion the very high price which the necessary articles of life do bear. Whatever be the cause, the fact is evident, and a melancholy one; and that is the object which should principally be attended to. For to dispute about causes in such a grievous circumstance, without attempting a remedy, would be insufferable mockery, or at best but an impertinent cavilling. For tho' a discovery of the cause is a likely means to enable us to remove the effect of it; yet to dwell upon that only would be just the same folly, as if when a house is on fire, or a man is drowning, the spectators should dispute how the fire happened, or the poor wretch fell into the river, till the one is utterly consumed, and the other dead. Supposing then that the forementioned causes have only a probable tendency to produce the effect we are speaking of (and this surely will not be denied) they should be obviated, if it can be done: and even granting that there has been some degree of scarcity, we need not despair of removing that by a diligent use of proper means. From a view of what has been said, if the causes assigned have in any degree occasioned dearth or scarcity of provisions, the redress is suggested in the same degree; and if the measures pointed out thereby were vigorously pursued, I should not doubt but that the grievance would be mostly, if not totally removed. Hence it will appear, that the remedy must be partly preventive, and

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partly applied immediately to the evil, so as to remove it, and produce the contrary. Now in order to this, however it might be for the benefit of some, that provisions should still continue at an high price, yet doubtless it is what Your Majesty would wish, it is what humanity dictates, and must be laid down as a settled principle necessary to the public good, that care should be taken to have them in plenty, and at such a rate, as may be advantageous in a reasonable degree to the seller, and suited to the ability of the bulk; that is, the lower and labouring part of the nation to purchase with ease. It is by no means consistent with good government to keep its subjects in a state of poverty. Indeed it has been said, that after Cyrus took Babylon, he oppressed the inhabitants by various impositions, from an opinion, that the best way to secure their obedience, was to keep them poor. But this can never be adopted as a maxim by a British administration; or if it should, Your Majesty would never allow it to be put in practice. Nor is it consistent with good policy, for any state thoughtlessly to suffer its subjects to continue in such circumstances, without seriously attempting a remedy, as that they should be obliged, through the mere difficulty of living, to leave their country, and seek another.

Now taking these things for granted; if there be any luxurious abuse and superfluous consumption among us of the bounties of Providence, so as to enhance the price of provisions, it seems to be a dictate of sound policy, and even necessary to enact sumptuary laws; so that, if the evil arising from luxury can neither be wholly restrained nor prevented,

prevented, a tax may be laid on it, in order to ease the public in some other respect, particularly in taking off the duty imposed on the common necessaries of life, such as salt, leather, &c.

In this land of liberty, I know, that every man will claim a right to spend his fortune in the way that is most agreeable to himself, whether in eating, drinking, horse-racing, or the more harmless taste for butterflies; and that it would be quite visionary to think of obtaining a law to direct his pleasures, and the use of his income. But surely, if men will indulge their extravagant humours, and vicious inclinations, if these are hurtful to the community, it can be no infringement of our excellent constitution, nor abridgment of the liberty, which, as Britons, we value ourselves so much upon, to make the headstrong and ruinous vices of some to contribute to the relief of others, and more especially to prevent the destruction of the whole.

Sumptuary laws have been very prudently adopted by other nations, and as they are much needed, they may have a good effect among us. Indeed, wherever they are necessary, it is a sure sign that something is fundamentally wrong in the state. Nor perhaps will they radically cure mens inclinations to extravagance and luxury; for such is the perverseness and pride of some people, and their propensity to opposition, that restraint increases the inclination, and a thing is often more eagerly coveted only because it is forbid, or to be obtained with more difficulty. Nor perhaps would such laws totally prevent the ruin of a kingdom.

It is well, if, by the wisdom of the legislature, they be so framed, as to promote some temporary benefit; if they keep the evils on account of which they are made within due bounds, and prolong the existence of a state till such times as better principles take place; or at least, that its dissolution be not precipitated. Luxury, we know, has been the ruin of the four great empires of the world; and if there is any truth in history, we may be sure that the same causes will produce the same effects among us.

There are many articles of luxury which may well bear it, and ought to be taxed; more especially such as do any how contribute to increase the price of provisions, among which horses are to be placed in the foremost rank. They are generally believed to be one principal cause of the national grievance, and it cannot admit of a doubt with any thinking person. If then they have been so much multiplied among us, as that they have devoured what was necessary for the support of the human race, nothing is more reasonable than that their numbers should either be diminished, or that those who will keep them should be obliged to contribute something extraordinary toward the removal of the evil which has been occasioned by them, or in some other respect to the relief of their aggrieved fellow-subjects.

Such are our notions of liberty at present, that men will hardly be brought to submit to laws that would lay them under any restraint to ruin either themselves, or their country. But if they will indulge their inclinations to luxury, should not
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found policy avail itself thereof? Does not the necessity of the times, does not the public good, and perhaps even our existence as a free state require something of this kind? And what more worthy to be taxed, than pleasures and means of luxury? They are not indulged but of choice, or from vanity and ostentation; but if this bears hard upon the lower orders of society, reason and equity require, that if so considerable a cause of such grievance cannot be prevented, it should at least be so controlled, as to render the grievance more tolerable.

And then, what just objection can there be against taxing all horses that are used merely for pleasure, such particularly as are kept only for hunting and racing? Nay, it would be worthy of consideration, whether all saddle-horses should not be subject to a moderate duty, except such as are kept by tradesmen and husbandmen for their necessary business; and even they also, as well as all others, to be liable to the same, whenever their pride or vanity prompt them to keep a horse for a servant to attend them.

But there are many and very powerful reasons for laying an heavy tax upon race-horses, besides this, of their being a means to increase the price of provisions. They are the means of introducing a spirit of gaming and dissipation, and actually occasion the ruin of many. It was formerly thought a prudent thing, to encourage the breeding of strong and swift horses, to give a royal bounty of an hundred pounds to be run for by horses six years old, four mile heats, carrying twelve stone;

and such royal plates have increased very much. But as there is a general departure from the first institution in every article, there can be no reason for continuing the encouragement to it. Besides, the corruption of the national morals, and the dearth of provisions, occasioned in some measure by these utterly useless and destructive animals *, very powerfully plead for the immediate discontinuance of all such exhibitions; and it is submitted with the utmost deference, whether it would not be an illustrious proof of royal wisdom, and of true fatherly care for the subject, to withdraw them totally for the future.

As upon horses under particular predicaments, so upon all livery-servants a tax should be imposed, or rather upon those who keep them. These are generally a very stout set of men, and may be accounted among the least beneficial members of the community. This way of life is their choice, either from a love of ease, and dislike to work, or from a desire to be as like gentlemen as they can; and dependent as they are, they ape that character in proportion to the rank of the master they serve;

* I have been credibly informed, that a noted breeder of race-horses in the north of England gave every foal considerably more than one cow's milk, till it was three years old. This would have afforded a nourishing aliment to several persons; and as, in my humble opinion, it is a base prostitution of grass, &c. so it is a real loss to the public of so much milk, butter, and cheese. And if all breeders adopt the same practice, what a hurt must it be to the nation? Therefore I may be allowed to call them destructive animals, since they are greatly ruinous to the morals and fortunes of men, and occasion such a wasteful consumption of the gifts of Providence.

so that it is not uncommon for these self-made gentry of imagined consequence, to treat men of more useful and liberal stations with insolence. The increase however of riches and of luxury among us, has occasioned an increase of such persons, insomuch that a man of fortune would hardly think himself, much less be known to be such, or have due respect without his servant in livery. It is now become, in a manner, a necessary appendage and badge to worldly prosperity; and the master and mistress expect to be honoured because they have got a servant at their back. The vast numbers that are now employed in this way, are a considerable drawback upon the national stock of industry. With regard to the public, they are much the same in this free and commercial country, as those who in a Popish one shut themselves up in cloisters. The public has occasion for them, and I will say, a claim to their service in some other and more useful capacity, either as manufacturers, husbandmen, or sailors, &c.

But it will be objected, How do livery-servants contribute to raise the price of provisions? they must be maintained, and will eat no more because they are such kind of servants, than if they were not. But if they eat not more, they are not only less careful, but more extravagant and wasteful. Being high fed, they become saucy, and so occasion a greater consumption than is necessary, even often to the great hurt of their masters. But setting these considerations aside, if they were not in this station they might be useful in some other way; perhaps they would be helpful to raise provisions.

visions. However, if they were dependent upon their labour for their subsistence, they would be more frugal, careful, and live upon plainer food.

If therefore, to keep up their distinction, gentlemen will have their servants, as it is their choice, let them be taxed for every one so retained. If on this account some should drop the practice, or diminish their number, by which some few would be restored to the public, there would be no fear of this becoming general, for it would greatly soothe the pride and vanity of others; and thus some relief might be hoped for, by applying the produce of such a tax to lessen some of the taxes which bear hard upon the generality of people in this kingdom.

In the next place, if the reasoning adopted in this performance be just, then it cannot but be evident, that frugality and oeconomy are necessary in some measure to remove this national evil, the excessive dearness of the necessary articles of life. It is true indeed, that this will not increase the quantity of provisions, but it will do what is much the same, it will lessen the consumption, and therefore the demand; and consequently this would influence the price of provisions, just as if their quantity was increased in the same proportion. I know it will be hard to persuade people to furnish their tables in a less expensive way, and to depart from their usual method, or indeed that they could live upon a less number of dishes. But this is the effect of a mistaken and prejudiced judgment, or of a vicious custom, or of not thinking at all. Oeconomy and frugality will do great things

things to produce plenty; and tho' these should be accounted vulgar virtues, and below the dignity and notice of the high-born and opulent, yet they might, one would hope, be induced to practise the same, at least occasionally, from a principle of patriotism. Thus even the ladies, as well as gentlemen, would become so far real patriots; and many, who now make a great noise about their patriotism, would perhaps justify their pretences by the best claim they can lay thereto. However, I am afraid that it is a vain thing to expect that the great will ever become generally attentive to family-oeconomy, and exhibit patterns of frugality deserving the imitation of those below them. Their education and dissipated manner of life preclude all hope of that kind. The brightest example of domestic virtues set them by Your Majesty, and Your most amiable Queen, cannot prevail with them to practise conjugal fidelity, and to renounce the turbulent, the guilty, and expensive pleasures of vagrant amours; much less may we hope to see them become good and regular oeconomists. But surely it is neither beneath the middling nor lower ranks of the good people of this kingdom, the gentry, yeomanry, and tradesmen, nor is it merely visionary to expect it from them. They form a large proportion of the whole every where, and if they were to retrench their table-expences, it would surely be productive of good consequences. Governor Pownall has approved himself an useful member of society, and procured infinitely more real honour, than they who were the authors of the dog

and fish acts, &c. by his great and truly laudable attention to the single article of bread; for every one that impartially considers it, must see that there would be a great saving of grain, if the law, which he was instrumental to obtain, was generally observed in making of bread. A larger quantity of nourishing bread would actually be got from the same quantity of grain, and this would in effect be the same as to render it cheaper.

But then, in order to adopt and reap the benefit of this measure, it is necessary to introduce a species of housewifery, which the prudent matrons of this nation were formerly remarkable for; but which now is pretty generally laid aside, more especially in towns of any considerable size: I mean the buying of their corn, grinding and making it into bread for their families. By this they would have an unadulterated and wholesome bread, of which they cannot otherwise be sure, and would even purchase it cheaper; for doubtless they would save the profits which are charged by the mealman and common baker. However necessary mealmen and bakers are in the metropolis, and some few other populous places and sea-ports, yet in others they should generally be set aside as a species of dealers that have become necessary through the want of family-industry, care, and management, or through pride and luxury; and even in the largest cities and towns, if grain could be procured in small quantities, as many as are able should, for their own interest, make their bread directly from it. Hence the legislature should enact proper laws (if such there be not already)

already) and the magistrate should be diligent to enforce them, in order that corn and other articles of provision be brought to market, and there only publicly sold. All regrating, engrossing, and forestalling should be severely punished, and (if possible) put an end to. Millers should not be suffered to be corn-merchants, which in many places they are; whereby they deal largely in that article, and have a great influence to raise the market-price, which always is for their advantage, as by that means they sell both what they get by grinding, and what they purchase, at a higher rate: whereas they should be restricted to their proper business, and allowed only to sell that corn which they obtain by way of moulter.

In like manner all butchers should be restrained from following the business of a grazier, and not be permitted to keep more land in their own possession than the law allows. That pernicious custom also of uniting two or more farms into one, or suffering the same person to occupy more than one farm of a certain value at a time, should be adverted to and guarded against. Thus provisions would be distributed through a number of hands; they would come sooner to market, there would be a more regular supply, and then the price would always be fixed by the quantity and demand.

Thus as luxury, with the means of supporting it, ought to be taxed, or restrained by sumptuary laws; as internal oeconomy and frugality should be promoted, in order to reduce the price of victuals, and every method prevented, as far as can

be, whereby such necessary articles may be hindered from resting in fewer hands, and their value enhanced; so whenever they become too dear or scarce, then especially proper measures should be used to increase the quantity. As this seems to be an object, which all men would naturally and primarily wish for, so there are various methods which offer themselves, whereby to attain so desirable an end.

And first, As plenty is necessary to the well-being of any state, and every member of the community ought to contribute what he can towards it; so they whose province more particularly it is to raise provisions, should be subject to such regulations as may contribute to the good of the whole according to this intention. As for instance; that every one who manages any land, if tillable, whether it be his own, or he rents it, should be obliged to maintain a number of black cattle or sheep, or both, in proportion to the number of ploughs which he keeps constantly at work. I think I have read somewhere of such a law once in being; and if there was, it is a pity so salutary an one should either be repealed, or suffered to fall into disuse; or if there never was such a law, it is to be wished such an one was made. For as self-preservation is the first law of nature, so every nation should consult its own welfare in the first place; and this primarily consists in the easy and happy subsistence of its subjects. And,

Secondly, Where a country is naturally fertile, and able to produce more than its inhabitants can consume annually, especially corn, there in a plentiful

tiful year a proper quantity should be laid up in store, and reserved against a less plentiful one. Supposing that corn is an article of commerce, and brings great riches into a nation, yet it can never be good policy to part with all the surplus of one or more years produce for the sake of a present pecuniary gain, which must surely be parted with in turn in a time of scarcity; or to depend upon the future goodness of the seasons, which are absolutely out of the power of human beings to command. The way for a nation to grow rich by any branch of trade, is, as far as human prudence can direct, to secure that particular source of its riches; or at least not to be under a necessity of parting with the riches it has already acquired for the sake of that very article by which they were got. If the latter should be the case, it would be to be poor and rich by turns; and if such a people could be said to live in plenty and opulence, they must live very precariously, and not always so. But where abundance has been experienced, and the continuance of it is in the power of the people, as far as such a thing can be, there poverty and scarcity are borne with more difficulty and murmuring. Hence the sound policy, if not the necessity, of establishing magazines of corn. From the example of other nations, we see the salutary effects of such an institution. The Dutch have not land enough to grow corn for their own subjects, and yet by this prudent measure, they not only have sufficient for their home-consumption, and to guard against either scarcity, or an undue price of that necessary article;

article ; but are able to furnish other nations with it, to their own great emolument. Bishop Burnet in his travels, [Letter from Zurich] also tells us, that Geneva has always two years provision of corn in store. This he observes is necessary against any extremities under which the State may fall ! Every inhabitant there may buy his own corn where he pleases ; only bakers and public-houses must buy of the Chamber of Corn. And why might not some such measure as this be set on foot in this kingdom ? If our rulers were heartily disposed to it, any difficulties attendant on erecting magazines might easily be surmounted. Scarcity and excessive dearth would hereby always be prevented ; and as corn has been a considerable article of trade, it would be the best means and security of almost constantly carrying on that branch without hurt to the inhabitants. Without mentioning the method and facility with which this may be carried into execution, I shall only observe, that it may be objected against erecting magazines for grain in England, that it would fix the price of land, and the produce of it, by which the landed interest would suffer. Suppose it did ? What is this to the easy and comfortable support of millions, who are the strength and defence of the nation ? But it would not even do this altogether ; for the ground that is higher cultivated, as it will yield more, consequently it will both let and sell for more ; and admitting that the price of wheat should never exceed four, or four shillings and sixpence the Winchester bushel for home-consumption (which is as much as the generality can afford to
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give for it, as it is now become their main article for bread) it would do pretty well for the farmer; yet still, when there is a demand for it abroad, and that will somewhere or other be constant, it would fetch a better price for exportation; and by the assistance of the bounty the merchant, as well as the farmer, would get a sufficient profit; and thus there would be a certain reward to industry without distressing the poor.

But farther. In times of excessive dearth or scarcity of grain, or any other article of provision, the quantity should be increased, by bringing it into the nation from abroad. But little has been done in this way, except in salted provisions from Ireland, and that has done little service; because bread has for several years been too high: and when that is the case, it will, as we see, have an influence upon the other necessary articles of support.

The merchant has imported very little corn. He was afraid the price would fall before he could bring his cargo to market. Such fears are not altogether groundless; for the farmers have it now too much in their power to regulate the price of corn; and it is no wonder if they should drop it for a time to discourage importation on the one hand, or to promote exportation on the other, since both must issue for their advantage. The merchant then will not import, except to his interest; and it is reasonable that he should have some gain for his risk and pains. But he will trade upon better and surer prospects; and therefore it is not from the merchant that we are to expect

expect any great and permanent relief. It is only to be obtained by importers, who are disinterested; and this might be done to purpose, by gentlemen of fortune entering into subscription to hire ships, and import grain into different parts of the kingdom. As such persons would seek no gain to themselves, by selling it for more than the freight, prime cost, and other incident expences should amount to, so they would be almost sure to lose nothing; or if they should lose something, it could not be much; and even in that case, what a pleasure would they have? And if this was done, and continued whenever a legal importation is permitted, that is, when corn is confessed on all hands to be too dear, it would certainly reduce its price; and what true patriotism would it be for gentlemen, thus, of their abundance, to contribute to the happiness of their fellow-countrymen, as well as to prevent a few griping wretches taking advantage of the distresses of the needy. This would be a more real and lasting service, than by entering into subscriptions, whereby in hard times a temporary and partial relief, even but of a few weeks, is procured to the necessities of the indigent*.

* In the year 1757, as I remember, wheat being above nine shillings the Winchester bushel at Carlisle, Sir James Lowther, at his sole expence, imported a considerable quantity both there and in other parts of Cumberland, and ordered it to be sold at so moderate a price, that it was soon reduced to four shillings in the market. This was a laudable instance of public generosity; and an example well deserving the imitation of the great and opulent.

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But perhaps this is an Utopian scheme, however benevolent it is; for that gentlemen of independent fortunes, being also owners of landed property, no such assistance can be expected from them, because it may be imagined that this would hurt their tenants, and lower their rent-rolls. Be it so then, that there is no hope of relief from the merchant or gentleman. We need not despair, tho' all the mentioned sources of redress should fail, yet another is left. Your Majesty will ever be concerned for your people. You, Sir, will ever be ready to adopt and heartily pursue all such measures as shall be for their benefit; and if relief in such times of difficulty as the present cannot be obtained but by Your Majesty's interference, it is humbly submitted to your royal consideration, whether the means be not in your power. Your dominions in America will always furnish an ample supply of corn. They will ere long be the granary of all Europe, and, except in times of urgent necessity, will wrest that trade in grain out of the hands of your subjects at home, for the sake of which, from a selfish and ill-judged policy, they starve their fellow-countrymen, and force them into a foreign climate. Neither can Your Majesty want the means of procuring relief to your people, so long as you have so numerous a fleet entirely at your own command; and your treasury can furnish the money which may be wanted for a time, on condition of its being returned to the public without any loss. It is therefore with all humility submitted to Your Majesty, whether some of your sloop of war and frigates

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might

might not be fitted up occasionally, without any great expence to government, or prejudice to the ships, to fetch corn from America, and such a number of them employed as to furnish a supply to, and deliver their lading at, different ports of Great Britain or Ireland, at such rates as would to the full repay the expence of purchase, loading, and delivery, &c.; the State would not hereby commence merchants, but only act for the public good. The service would be no way dishonourable to the officers; and the men, of which perhaps one half of the ship's complement might be sufficient, would be better trained for sea, than by lying in a port, or cruising in a channel.

The Roman emperors did not think it beneath them to provide corn for the state; nor do some well-regulated governments at present account it an object unworthy of them. And we may with equal confidence infer, that our Gracious King, who so humanely felt for the wants of his people, as to recommend relief thereof to his parliament, will not esteem it unworthy of Himself to provide plenty for them by any means in his power; and if this measure should be adopted only in times of peace, and when the price of wheat rises to that, when by law the ports are open, all material objections against it would be removed.

But besides the importation of corn, proper endeavours should be used to increase the quantity of other kinds of provisions; and perhaps this may be done most effectually by a greater attention to our fisheries than is now paid to them. It is well known that our coasts abound with fish, excellent

cellent both for variety and goodness. Here is an inexhaustible source of provision at hand, which requires only labour and a moderate expence to bring to market, with advantage to the fisherman, and to the great relief of the people in general. As fish would be a very good supply, so if it could be had upon reasonable terms by the lower ranks of people, there is no doubt but they would be glad of it; and it could not also but be the means of rendering other kinds of victual cheaper. The conclusion then is, that our sea-fishery should be more promoted than it is by every encouragement that can be given to it.

And Your Majesty has it in your power to do this with greater effect than hitherto, and in such a manner as would do You, Sir, the greatest honour; that is, by applying the many hundreds that are now given as royal plates, to the encouragement of the sea-fishery. I would by no means presume to direct the application of such money, but suppose it should be distributed in some such way as the following; viz. certain sums to be assigned to the more considerable market-towns along the coast quite round the island, and pecuniary rewards of ten, six, and four pounds to be given annually to one, two, or three boats, or other vessels that should take the greatest quantity of sizeable cod, ling, hallybut, turbot, skait, or other fish within the year. The premiums to be paid by a person appointed in such towns, who, having a moderate salary, should be obliged to take an account of the number and size, or total weight of fish respectively taken, and brought fresh to market,

market, the premiums being adjudged by a committee of the inhabitants, and if every town was to add something to the reward by a voluntary subscription, that would be a still greater motive to industry, and upon the whole a benefit and saving to the people, as it would increase the quantity of provisions. In like manner a premium should be given to such fishermen, as in the course of the year should cure the greatest quantity of salt-fish, cod, ling, tusk, &c. either dried or in pickle.

Thus there would be a continual supply of wholesome food distributed all over the kingdom; and this surely would be an object more deserving of a royal bounty than race-horses, at least Your Majesty would have the hearty thanks of by far the greatest and best part of your subjects.

Should any of the above measures for lessening the price of provisions, and for promoting plenty in your dominions, meet with approbation, there is no doubt they would also obtain all the assistance that You, Sir, can give toward the execution of them.

Necessity and sound policy plead for something effectual to be done, and speedily. Mechanics, lower tradesmen, and others, sadly feel the difficulty of procuring a comfortable living, such as they have been accustomed to. The poorer sort of your subjects are reduced to the greatest straits and hardships. They are emigrating in great numbers to foreign countries. Their emigration is not the effect of wantonness or curiosity, but of necessity. The facts are notorious every where.

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If the poverty of the people creates no alarm, their removal into another part of the globe may and should.

There was a time when emigration would have been thought right, and beneficial to the mother-country; and of course promoted. But now, it cannot be so. Our colonies are well stocked with inhabitants; they have a sufficient number to carry on a very extensive trade; and, in the common course of propagation, must in no very distant period become exceedingly numerous, perhaps alarmingly so to the mother-country. For certain it is, if they are not destroyed by war, &c. from the stock they now have, in a few generations they will so increase, as to exceed by millions the number of inhabitants in Great Britain and Ireland. It is then time for government to awake, and not suffer the patience of the people to be overstrained by the distresses they labour under. When men are starving for want of the necessary supports of life, it is natural for them to seek relief; and it would be barbarous and cruel to hinder them to do it, by denying them the liberty of removing elsewhere. They will take it, as we now see they do; and therefore the inference is plain—either reduce the price of provisions, or the nation will be greatly drained of its inhabitants.

Your Majesty reigns over a people sensible of the benefits derived from their having placed Your Majesty's family on the throne of these kingdoms,—over a people, who are subjects from principle, and therefore grateful; and who are ever disposed to support the honour and independence of your crown

crown with splendor, with dignity, with their lives and fortunes—over a people, who are fond of their liberty, which not only should never be diminished, but be carefully preserved; and it is the confidence of your subjects, that You, Sir, esteem it your greatest glory to maintain this sacred flame in its just operation, and that you reign over a free people. The doctrine of the divine hereditary right of kings has long been exploded, and is only fit for dark ages, and for slaves, over which a wise and good man would not chuse to reign, if in his choice, unless with the Godlike view to civilize, to instruct, to improve, and make them happy. But this liberty, and the love of it, may be impaired by various causes, by luxury, by dissipation, and other vices among the great; and by poverty and distress among the little. And it is easy to see, that when the above-mentioned vices prevail among the former, among them venality will prevail; and when the latter are in that situation before described, among them impatience of subjection will take place, and anarchy among all.

A riotous disposition is dangerous, it renders men less observant of the laws; and when irreverence for them becomes general, it will be difficult, as well as unpleasing to humanity, however necessary it may be, to reduce them to obedience by such means as are requisite in the first place. And must it not be very affecting when men are driven by hunger, or an unreasonable price of provisions, to relieve themselves by taking them by force from those who will not, or cannot sell,
but

but upon terms, which, through their poverty, they are unable to comply with? I beg leave to repeat it, must it not be very affecting to punish men in such circumstances?

This is indeed an hard necessity, and leaves men the only alternative, either to perish through want, if they are passively submissive; or to be put to death by the laws, if they attempt to relieve themselves by the only means in their power; and yet the support of government in such case will enforce the latter measure. But how unpleasing must that be, even in the idea, to a King of Your Majesty's humanity and tenderness? On the other hand, what joy must it administer, to know that your people live in ease and abundance, and in a willing subjection? Resources, it is presumed, are not wanting; and it is hoped, nay, we may be confident, that whatever is in Your Majesty's power will not be wanting, both to remove the present grievances, and to promote an easy plenty of the necessary articles of life, and to secure the continuance of the same, as far as can be, in future, to every part of your dominions. Thus the present and rising generations will deservedly celebrate your praise, and bless the name of GEORGE THE THIRD.

F I N I S.

but upon terms, which, through their poverty, they are unable to comply with? I beg leave to repeat it, most it not be very affecting to punish men in such circumstances?

This is indeed an hard necessity; and leaves men the only alternative, either to perish through want, which they are passively submissive; or to be put to death by the law, if they attempt to relieve themselves by the only means in their power; and yet the efforts of Government in such case will enforce the latter measure. But how surprising must that be even in England, to a King of Your Majesty's humanity and clemency? On the other hand, what joy must it administer, to know that your people live in ease and abundance; and in willing submission? Heedless, it is presumed, are not we; and it is found, nay, we may be confident, that whatever is in Your Majesty's power will not be wanting both to remove the present and future causes of complaint as early as possible, and to secure the continuance of the same as far as can be in future to every part of your dominions. I have the pleasure and thing generations will actively obey your laws, and that the name of your Majesty will be



